

Claims

1. A method for preparing a fermented beverage, comprising:

providing a starch hydrolysate, said starch hydrolysate consisting essentially of free glucose and saccharide oligomers, and, in the presence of yeast, a soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source, and an enzyme that releases fermentable carbohydrates from the starch hydrolysate, allowing fermentable carbohydrates to be released from said starch hydrolysate and allowing fermentation of said fermentable carbohydrates to proceed to yield a fermented beverage, wherein the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source is more organoleptically neutral than corn steepwater and is present in an amount sufficient to sustain fermentation to an inactivating alcohol concentration in the fermented beverage without being rate limiting in the fermentation.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising removing yeast from said fermented beverage.

3. The method of claim 2, said yeast being removed via centrifugation.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises substantially removing yeast-based contaminants which compromise flavor of the fermented beverage.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the yeast-based contaminants are removed by treating the fermented beverage with carbon.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the method further comprises substantially removing salts and organic acids which compromise flavor of the fermented beverage.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the salts and organic acids are removed by ion-exchange filtration of the fermented beverage.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the yeast is a baker's yeast.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the yeast is a *Saccharomyces* yeast.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein said enzyme is present in an amount sufficient to sustain the level of fermentable carbohydrates in the fermentation mixture at a level of from 2-5% for at least 90% of the time of fermentation.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said starch hydrolysate is a maltodextrin.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein said starch hydrolysate is syrup solid.

13. The method of claim 9, wherein said starch hydrolysate is present in an amount sufficient to allow fermentation to proceed to within 1% of the inactivating alcohol concentration for said yeast.

14. The method of 1, wherein the enzyme cleaves α -1,4 and α -1,6 oligosaccharide linkages in the starch hydrolysate.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the enzyme is a glucoamylase.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the enzyme is a maltotriose-releasing enzyme.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the enzyme is a β -amylase.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source is present in the aqueous fermentation broth in an amount of about 0.5% to about 3.0% (w/v).

19. The method of claim 1, wherein the starch hydrolysate is a liquefied starch having a DE of less than 20.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein the starch hydrolysate is a liquefied starch having a DE of greater than or equal to 20.

21. A fermented beverage prepared in accordance with claim 1.

22. A diluted beverage comprising the fermented beverage of claim 21 diluted to an alcohol content of about 4% to about 6%, said fermented beverage having had a greater alcohol content prior to dilution.

23. A method for preparing a fermented beverage comprising selecting for fermentation an amount of a starch hydrolysate, an amount of yeast, an amount of an enzyme

that releases fermentable carbohydrates from the starch hydrolysate, and an amount of a soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source sufficient to sustain fermentation to an inactivating alcohol concentration without being rate limiting in the fermentation and, in the presence of the yeast, the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source, and the enzyme, allowing fermentable carbohydrates to be released from said starch hydrolysate and allowing fermentation of said fermentable carbohydrates to proceed to yield a fermented beverage, said starch hydrolysate consisting essentially of free glucose and saccharide oligomers, said nitrogenous yeast nutrient source being organoleptically more neutral than corn steepwater.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising removing yeast from said fermented beverage.

25. The method of claim 23, wherein the method further comprises substantially removing yeast-based contaminants which compromise flavor of the fermented beverage.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the method further comprises substantially removing salts and organic acids which compromise flavor of the fermented beverage.

27. The method of claim 23, wherein the yeast is a baker's yeast.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the yeast is a *Saccharomyces* yeast.

29. The method of claim 23, wherein said starch hydrolysate is present in an amount sufficient to allow fermentation to proceed to within 1% of the inactivating alcohol concentration for said yeast.

30. The method of claim 23, wherein said starch hydrolysate is a maltodextrin.

31. The method of claim 23, wherein the enzyme is a glucoamylase.

32. A method for preparing an ion-exchanged fermented beverage, comprising:
providing a starch hydrolysate, said starch hydrolysate consisting essentially of a maltodextrin;

in the presence of a *Saccharomyces* yeast, a soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source, and an enzyme that cleaves oligosaccharide linkages in the starch hydrolysate to

thus release fermentable carbohydrates from the starch hydrolysate, allowing fermentable carbohydrates to be released from said starch hydrolysate and allowing fermentation of said fermentable carbohydrates to proceed to yield a fermented beverage, the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source being organoleptically more neutral than corn steepwater and being present in an amount sufficient to sustain fermentation to an inactivating alcohol concentration without being rate limiting in the fermentation;

removing yeast from said fermented beverage;

subjecting the fermented mixture to carbon filtration to substantially remove yeast flavors, thereby resulting in a remaining mixture; and

subjecting the remaining mixture to ion exchange filtration to substantially remove salts and organic acids to produce an ion-exchanged fermented beverage.

33. A method for substantially removing yeast-based contaminants from a fermented beverage, comprising:

providing a fermented beverage, said beverage having been prepared by providing a starch hydrolysate, said starch hydrolysate consisting essentially of free glucose and saccharide oligomers, and, in the presence of yeast, a soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source, and an enzyme that releases fermentable carbohydrates from the starch hydrolysate, allowing fermentable carbohydrates to be released from said starch hydrolysate and allowing fermentation of said fermentable carbohydrates to proceed to yield a fermented beverage, wherein the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source is more organoleptically neutral than corn steepwater and is present in an amount sufficient to sustain fermentation to an inactivating alcohol concentration in the fermented beverage without being rate limiting in the fermentation; and

treating said fermented beverage with carbon.

34. A method according to claim 33, further comprising subjecting said fermented beverage after treating with carbon to ion-exchange filtration.

35. A method for preparing a fermented beverage, comprising:

providing a fermented beverage, said beverage having been prepared by providing a starch hydrolysate, said starch hydrolysate consisting essentially of free glucose and saccharide oligomers, and, in the presence of yeast, a soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source, and an

enzyme that releases fermentable carbohydrates from the starch hydrolysate, allowing fermentable carbohydrates to be released from said starch hydrolysate and allowing fermentation of said fermentable carbohydrates to proceed to yield a fermented beverage, wherein the soluble nitrogenous yeast nutrient source is more organoleptically neutral than corn steepwater and is present in an amount sufficient to sustain fermentation to an inactivating alcohol concentration in the fermented beverage without being rate limiting in the fermentation; and
adding a flavoring agent to said fermented beverage.

36. A method according to claim 35, further including diluting said fermented beverage to decrease the alcohol content thereof.

37. A method according to claim 35, said flavoring agent comprising an alcoholic extract.

38. A method according to claim 35, said beverage having been decolorized.

39. A beverage prepared in accordance with claim 35.